

E

415

B 94

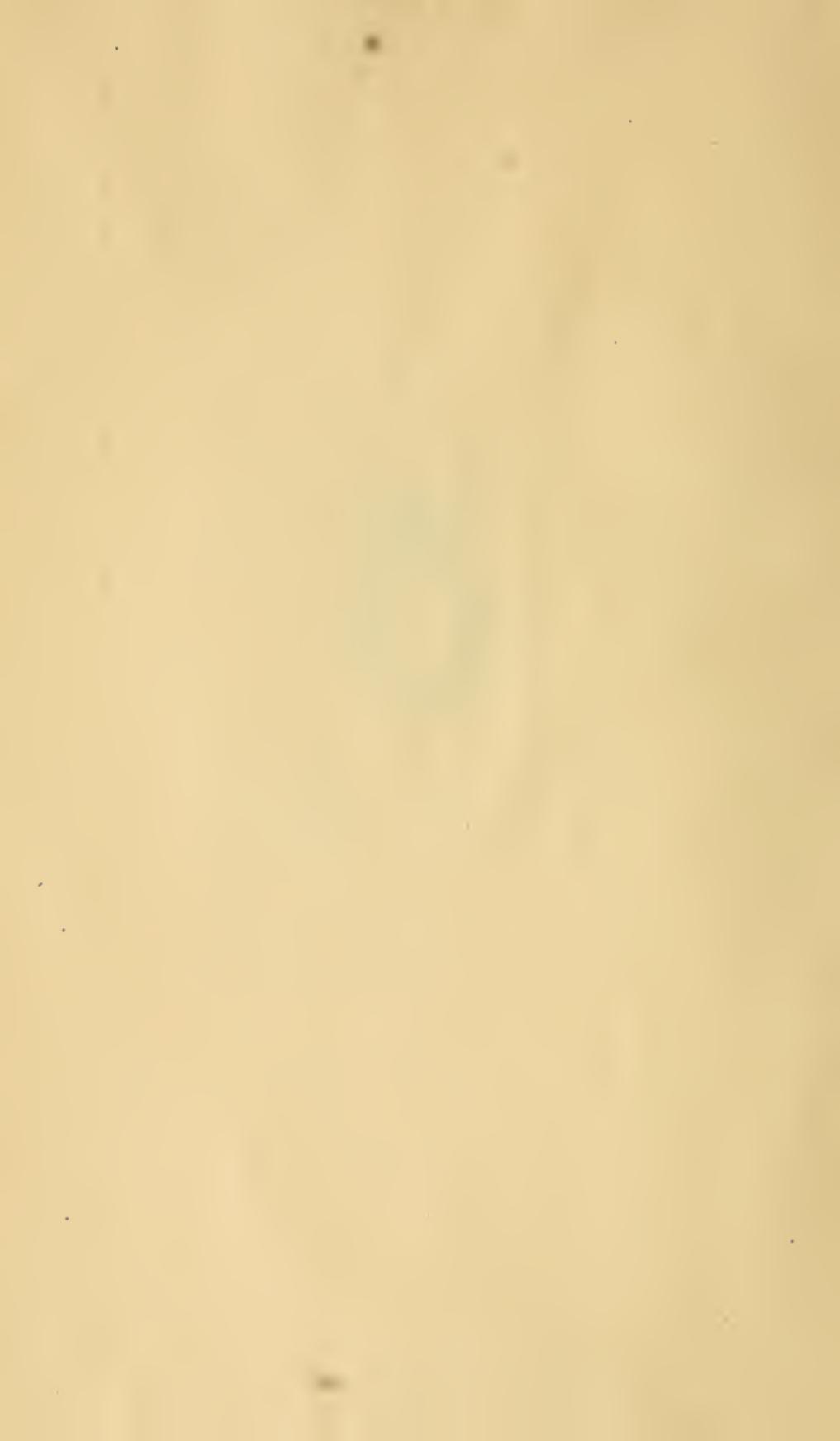


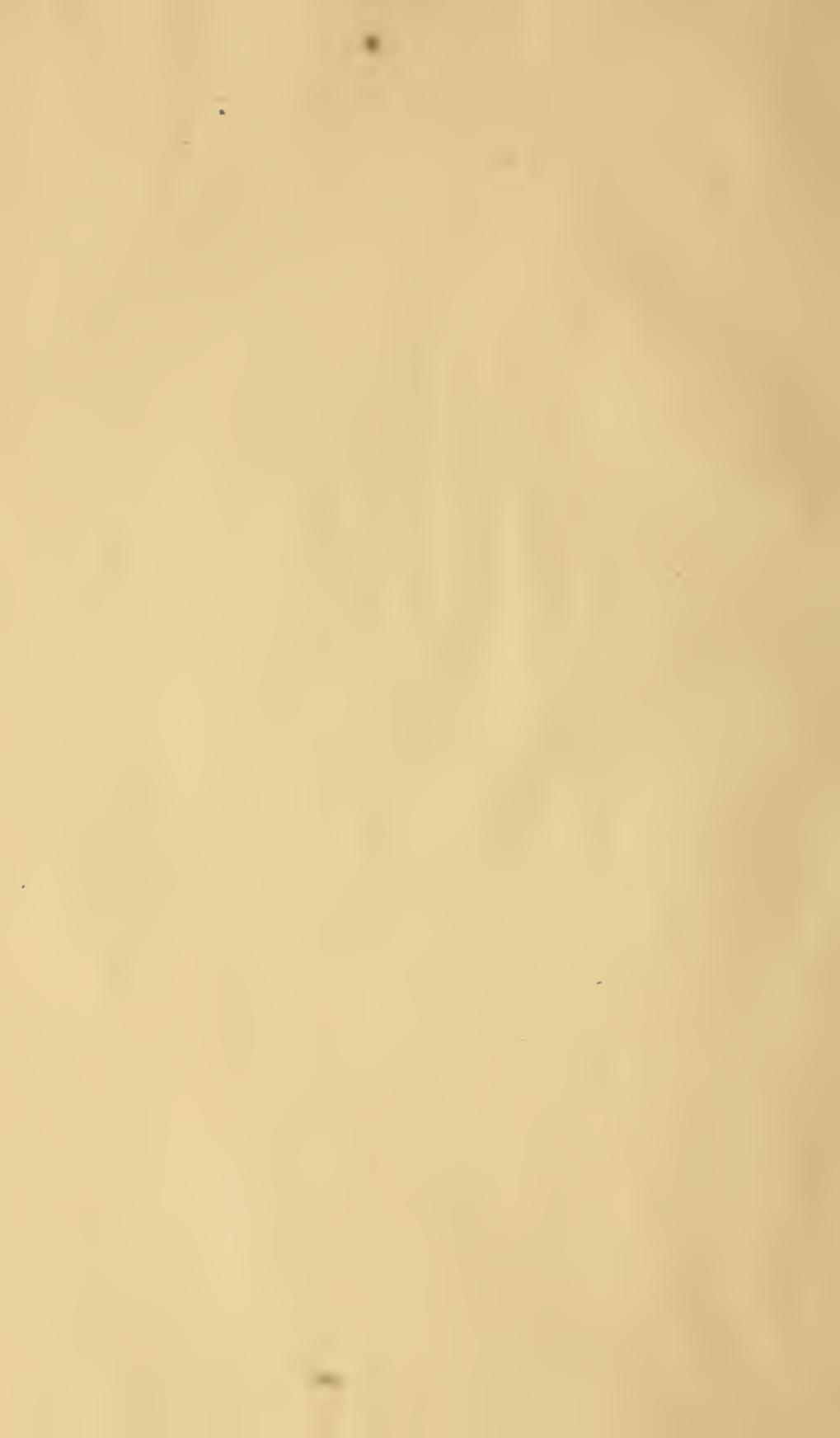
A Sermon
by
Burhard, Rev.
"



Class _____

Book _____





Causes of National Solitude.

A

658

784

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

THE THIRTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK,

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 25, 1847. •

BY

REV. SAMUEL D. BURCHARD.

11

NEW YORK:

S. W. BENEDICT, 16 SPRUCE STREET.

1848.

E415

B94

45° 51' E
04

NEW YORK, Dec. 1st, 1847.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

The undersigned, having listened on Thanksgiving-day, with deep interest, to your Sermon, entitled "*Causes of National Solicitude*," and believing that its truths are eminently adapted to the times, and that its circulation would exert a salutary influence, respectfully and earnestly solicit a copy for publication.

With sentiments of respect, we are affectionately yours,

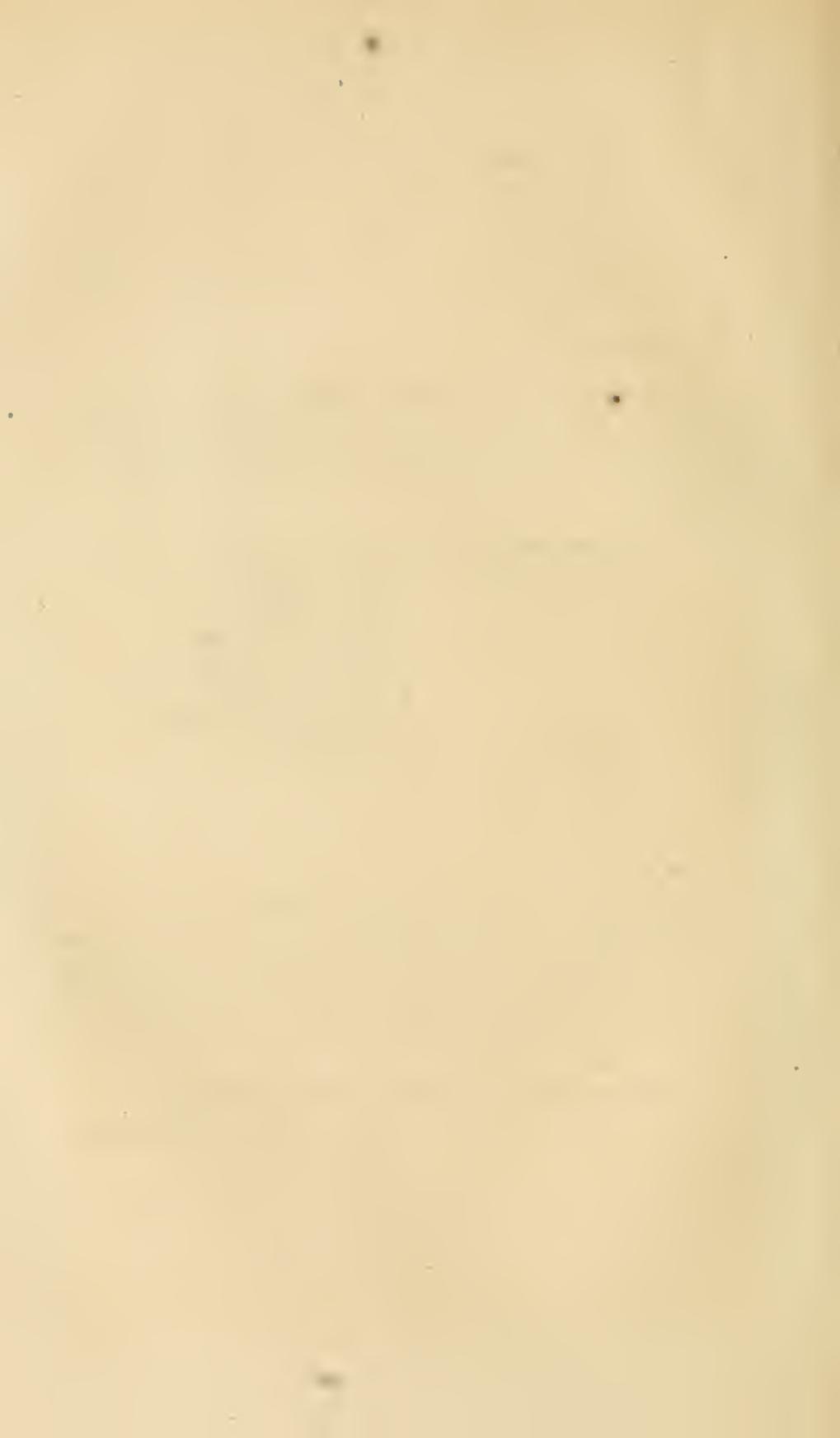
JOHN P. CUMMING,
JAMES GREEN,
JAMES STRUTHERS,
THOMAS CUMMING,
DEXTER FAIRBANK,
AMHERST WIGHT,
JONATHAN DANFORTH,
C. L. BARNES,
D. KNIGHT.

To Messrs. JOHN P. CUMMING, J. GREEN, and others.

GENTLEMEN,—I herewith submit, agreeably to your request, for the *press*, what, amid pressing pastoral duties, I had prepared and designed only for the *pulpit*. If, however, in your judgment, its publication will serve to awaken the community to a sense of their duty and danger, I cheerfully yield it to your disposal.

I have the honor, to be respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. D. BURCHARD.



S E R M O N.

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."—PSALMS ii : 11.

WE are assembled to-day, my hearers, at the call of the Chief Magistrate of our State. This day witnesses a sublime spectacle in the history of our country. It is interesting and encouraging to behold, in our Chief Magistrates, a disposition publicly to recognise the overruling Providence of God. Whether they are called to this by custom or example, or by a conscious sense of duty and obligation, it is, of *itself*, an occasion for gratitude. The duty of public thanksgiving, for national blessings, is recognised in the Bible, and is consonant with the purest feelings of Christian patriotism. It became an annual custom with our Puritan fathers. It has prevailed, with more or less uniformity, down to the present time. It is also an interesting coincidence, that *this* day has been set apart, and will be observed by so many of the States of this Union. May we not suppose, if there be patriotic joy in heaven, that the Sainted Spirits, who watched over our institutions in their early formation, are filled with extatic delight at this day's spectacle? They behold not a single State, but as it were, a nation gathered from their worldly business and cares to present the offerings of praise and thanksgiving to God. In these humble services are furnished the pledges of fealty and fidelity to the trust committed to their hands. So long as the Providence

of God, and the duty of prayer, and public thanksgiving are recognised by magistrates and the people, there is hope for our country, even in the darkest hour of her peril. There are times, indeed, in a nation's history, when humiliation, confession, and sorrow, are the most appropriate of all religious duties. When heavy judgments are abroad in the land, when we are suffering because of our national sins, when pestilence, famine or war, these messengers of the divine vengeance, are doing their work of death ; then, *fasting* instead of *feasting*—*mourning* instead of *rejoicing*, are the more appropriate exercises. And if we mistake not, we have fallen upon such times. True, no hostile foe has invaded our territory, disease and famine have not been commissioned to do their awful work. Our fields, on the contrary, have yielded an abundant increase—our land abounds with plenty—our husbandmen are rejoicing in the fruits of their labors—“the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and that wasteth at noonday,” is not known in all our borders. But still, an ominous cloud is hanging over us—there are existing and operating causes of national decay—there are disturbing elements—there are positive developments that God has a controversy with this nation. While then, on this day of public festivity, we would rejoice, we should do it discriminately, we should do it with trembling.

The text has been selected as an exponent of the above thoughts. It encourages religious joy. It fans the dying flame, and bids us *hope*, when hope is almost ready to expire. Joy in God is inculcated throughout the Bible. The apostle says, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.” The whole gospel system, with its provisions and promises, is calculated to create a well-spring of joy in the heart. Its announcement of pardon may well fill us with sublime rapture.. Its unfolding mysteries, its wonderful disclosures of the secrets of the divine nature are full of encouragement and hope. There is nothing in the gospel, as such, to fill us with trembling. Nothing but *sin* need excite

alarm. Nothing but sin makes the caution of our text appropriate. "*Rejoice with trembling.*" Sin personal jeopardizes the interests of the soul—sin national endangers the peace, the prosperity, the safety of a country. While then, we would rejoice, in view of the gospel, its ample provisions and promises, its blessings, present and prospective, personal and national, we would rejoice with trembling. Sin modifies and limits our joy, makes us even tremulous and solicitous, as we put the cup of blessing to our lips. While then, we come before the Lord with thanksgiving and joy, for his blessings vouchsafed and manifold, it will not be deemed, I trust, inappropriate to state some of the present aspects of our country which should tend to modify and chasten our joy. Gratitude is the deeper and purer, when God's mercies are viewed in contrast with our own ill deserts.

THE CAUSES OF NATIONAL SOLICITUDE WILL CONSTITUTE THE
THEME OF THE PRESENT DISCOURSE.

I. The *first* cause of national solicitude, which I mention, is the almost entire withdrawal of the converting influences of the Holy Spirit from our land.

We hesitate not to say, that the safety of this country is in God, and in the universal prevalence and triumph of his doctrines and truth. The conservative influences of Christianity must permeate through the mass of the people. Like the soft enfolding atmosphere, they must be felt everywhere, in the halls of legislation, at the public exchange, in the daily duties and activities of life. The religion of the Bible must become the religion of the land, summoning its votaries from every cottage and palace to its altars of devotion. Its sanctions and restraints must be felt by all classes —its institutions must be honored, its precepts obeyed, and its spirit imbibed. Now for this prevalence of Bible religion, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit. The community can be reached, by its restraining influence, only through the conversion of *individuals*; the world is to be con-

verted only by this individual process. The Savior is to see of the travail of his soul only, as the Spirit triumphs over individual hearts. By this method, the wilderness is to become a fruitful field, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. If there were no individual conversions, the influence of Christianity would die out from our world; its light would soon cease to shine upon the high places of the earth.

Now, how are individuals to be converted? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is not sufficient that we have the truth, an able ministry, and the holy ordinances; these, of themselves, will fail to produce the desired and necessary result. We say, therefore, that the converting influences of the Holy Spirit are the hope of this nation. If *they* are totally withdrawn, all is lost! The forms of religion may continue to be observed, but its moulding and conservative power is gone, its salutary restraints are removed, its hold upon the public conscience is relaxed, and the natural and necessary consequence is the prevalence of scepticism, the downfal of truth, the reign of unbridled lust and passion. Law and order are set at defiance, the Sabbath is desecrated, the altars of religion are broken down, and the very foundations of the social system are put in jeopardy.

Such are some of the direct or remote consequences of a withdrawal of the converting influences of the divine Spirit. When God is about to destroy a nation, as a general rule of his administration, he first leaves them to fill up the measure of their iniquities. Hence, when the divine forbearance was exhausted, and Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, mysterious voices were heard in the temple, saying—"Let us go hence," the temple was deserted and the city, with all the pride of her learning, and the glory of her wealth, was left to sit in the dust of humiliation, and weep over the ruins of her fallen grandeur.

What, then, is the aspect of our country in relation to the

presence or absence of the Holy Spirit? This inquiry is full of painful and practical interest. I am constrained to say, that it is a dark day for this country. Perhaps never, in its whole history, has there been such a dearth of revivals—such a total eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness—such an universal withdrawal of the converting influences of the Holy Spirit; and as a consequence, such pride, such worldliness, such impiety, such reckless daring in sinning, such profanations of the Sabbath, such political intrigues, such circumventions, such frenzy for office, such a readiness to sacrifice conscience at the shrine of maimmon, or on the altar of some sensual deity. It would seem, that the day of our national retribution had already come, and that we are nearing a crisis which will dissolve us into fragments; thus giving another illustration of the instability of human governments. Our only effectual security against this, is in the return of the Spirit's influences. This will save us from a doom which has befallen more powerful nations before us. We cannot rely upon the wisdom of our legislators, or upon the excellence of our republican form of government, or upon the mere apparatus of the gospel system. We need the vitalizing and converting influences of God's Spirit. We need a return of such days as were witnessed by Edwards, and Whitfield, and the Tennants, such as we ourselves have witnessed, when sinners were pricked in their hearts, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" I look along the moral map of nations, and I see that such seasons of Spiritual refreshing are not peculiar to this country. They are not strictly American in their character; they are associated with the moral history of those nations, the light of whose Christianity is encircling the world. I turn to India, and there comes to me floating on the still air from the spicy groves of Ceylon, songs, soft and sweet as the songs which the dark-eyed daughters of Judah sang to their King in Zion; and from the far off isles of the ocean, I hear infant voices, mingling with the

stern but subdued tones of old warriors, singing, *not* their terrible battle songs, to their war-gods, as they dance around their altars, but the songs of Zion to Zion's King ; and I see, in *these*, the triumphs of the Spirit and the pledges of the world's conversion. In these I rejoice, but when I look to my own country, I do it with trembling. The Spirit, in his converting influences, is absent—absent because of our sins —absent, when God is willing and waiting to be gracious, absent too when we have the assurance that He is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children. For this absence of the Spirit, there is deep guilt somewhere, there is overwhelming responsibility somewhere. The gospel of the blessed God is preached, but ministers are compelled to retire from their labors with the complaint of the prophet upon their lips, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

II. As a second cause of national solicitude, I mention the asperity of political party feeling.

Honest differences of opinion among men, in this world are to be expected. They exist in the social and religious world and upon almost every subject. Men occupy different points of observation, see objects through different mediums, and arrive at very different conclusions. All minds are not cast in the same mould, or educated under the same influences ; and will not move in the same direction. In this country especially, where men are permitted to think for themselves, on the great national questions settled at the ballot box, different—sometimes *conflicting* opinions—will be urged and advocated. This, of itself, is not an evil. It tends to awaken the mental energies of a people—to diffuse general intelligence, and impose a salutary and restraining influence over dominant political parties. Some friction is incidental to a republican form of government, and unless it be so great as to jostle the *whole* machinery, it is no detri-

ment, but rather a service. The danger is in excess, and especially where there are powerful local interests operating, as in different sections of this country. The South has interests somewhat separate and peculiar—the North, East, and West have interests. The advocates of these interests meet in a general Congress, each zealous to protect and promote that which they severally represent. And when these wide-spread interests come into collision, as they sometimes do, the whole country feels the shock. Many of our representatives, unlike the lofty and liberal minded patriots of other days, too often become the tools of a party, the slaves of a selfish and sordid ambition, and the great question with them is, not what measures are best adapted to promote the *general* good, but what will secure their re-election—win for them the spoils of office and the laurels of a political triumph? Lofty and disinterested patriotism is a thing too little known in these days of party management and political intrigue. We speak of this, as a *common* evil, not confined to either of the great political parties of this country, an evil that threatens the stability and safety of the social fabric. And this evil is enhanced at every recurring election. Every such event is like the tread of an earthquake—the elements of society are convulsed. Sectional jealousies and the spirit of party are kindled to a rage—the whole machinery of political manœuvre is put in motion—the dregs of a foreign population, who have not as yet learned the alphabet of our institutions, are drilled and marshalled for the conflict—the most exciting appeals are made to the worst passions of the carnal heart—public and private character is shamelessly vilified. Truth, justice, magnanimity, intelligence, patriotism, are qualifications seldom sought or demanded in the candidate for public favor. “Does he belong to our party?” “Will he adopt and defend our measures?” “Will he distribute the spoils of office to those who have served him?” Such are some of the inquiries of those, whose patriotism is all on their lips and

whose hearts have never felt its noble and generous pulsations. Now, my brethren, I must confess I tremble in view of this party spirit. It is so rank, reckless, and terrible, that I am afraid of it. I fear our beloved institutions cannot long survive under its withering and blasting influence. I look back upon the history of the past and remember, that Rome was never conquered, until the spirit of party prevailed; and then her strength was weakened and the elements of her decay were manifest. While united, while the spirit of patriotism breathed through her council-chambers, whether governed by consuls, kings or dictators, she was both the terror and the admiration of the world. Jerusalem fell not into the hands of her enemies, nor did the sacred songs of the Levites in the temple give place to the rude jests of an uncircumcised soldiery, until she became divided. We might refer to other nations, that have stood, like a tower of strength and beauty, until internal divisions and party strifes have weakened their energies and rendered them an easy prey to their conquering foes. We need no prophetic voice to tell, that a nation's days are numbered, when party spirit becomes rife and reckless of principle. What, then, is our danger? Not the arms of a foreign foe; but like Cæsar in the capitol, we may fall by the hands of our boasted friends. The asperity and violence of party spirit, unless modified and checked, may prove our ruin. What, then, is our duty as patriots and Christians? I answer, to frown upon it and discourage it—to use our elective franchise for the good of the *whole* country—to vote for men of intelligence and sound principle, irrespective of party—to freely sacrifice individual prejudices and sectional jealousies on the altar of our country's good. This is the spirit of true patriotism—the spirit which God will own and honor—the spirit of our worthy sires, around whom the halo of everlasting admiration dwells; and until *this* spirit becomes widely and universally diffused, we must rejoice with trembling solicitude.

III. I mention the aspect of our country, in relation to slavery, as a *third* cause of national solicitude.

The time has come, when we must look at this subject, not timidly, not evasively, not in the spirit of angry denunciation, but as Christian patriots, who love our country and seek her highest weal. The world is looking at *it* and at *us*, with a frown of lofty indignation, because we hold three millions of our fellow men in hopeless vassalage, while we are boasting of our freedom and the glory of our institutions.

There is a manifest inconsistency here, which is a deep and burning disgrace to this nation. I am aware of the sensitiveness of the public mind on this general subject and of the disposition to muzzle the mouth of the preacher and the press. But *this* humble pulpit shall speak out, at appropriate times, clearly, and plainly on the great moral and important questions that agitate the country for which our fathers periled their lives. There are times, when it is the duty of ministers of Christ to look at national evils and expose them, in their moral offensiveness, to the public eye; and they cannot be true to their conscience and their trust and yet be silent. I claim *this* to be such a time. We are assembled to express our gratitude for national blessings, and in contrast to contemplate our national sins. I need not pause to argue the question, before an assembly of intelligent freemen, whether slavery be a sin. Can there be a doubt of the moral *wrongfulness* of that system which takes a human being, made in God's own image, with aspirations high as heaven, and plunders him of all his dearest rights, stifles every generous and lofty feeling—loads him with chains, and herds him with cattle? Whatever the law may say of this individual—let it term him a chattel or a thing; yet he is a *man*—a *fellow man*—an immortal creature! And still a *slave* in a free, civilized, and Christian country!

“ Go where he may, he feels himself confined.
And wears the fetters of an abject mind.”

Alas ! I blush for my country's wrongs, and can almost make the language of another my own.

" Away ! away, I'd rather hold my neck
 By doubtful tenure from a Sultan's beck,
 In climes, where liberty has scarce been named,
 Nor any right but that of *ruling* claim'd,
 Than thus to live, where boasted freedom waves
 Her fustian flag, in mockery o'er slaves."

Talk as you may of the lenity of individual masters, the system is a dark, cold, cruel system, that knows no mercy and feels no relenting. It is, in my view, the concentration of all moral wrong, the very *climax* of iniquity ; and under the deep, dismal shadows of the system is perpetrated and sanctioned almost every crime of the decalogue. And yet this is an American system, recognised in her constitution, supported by her laws, and often made the passport to her posts of honor and political emolument. I confess, my brethren, when I contemplate the workings of this system, its aspiring spirit, its struggles for the balance of power, its determination to defy the sentiment of the world, and extend and perpetuate its dark dominions ; when I view *these* things, I tremble for my country. I tremble, not only for her honor, but her institutions,—that legacy of the valor and patriotism and heroic deeds of the honored dead. She cannot long endure against the clanking chains of three millions of manacled slaves, each crying to heaven for redress ! If there is any such thing as justice, if there is any intelligence to be derived from the pages of the past ; this nation, as a nation, unless this curse be removed, will as certainly crumble into decay, as that God sits a Sovereign on his throne, and is the avenger of the oppressed.

All the science, history, and philosophy of the universe can never turn away the sword of national retribution. And what shall be said of the *direct* tendencies of this system upon the character and destiny of this great republic—of that dark, doleful spirit brooding ominously over so large a portion of this land ? I introduce it to your sober considera-

tion, as, beyond all doubt, one of the most obvious and terrible elements of social dissolution that could possibly have been imparted to our general constitution. Its demoralizing and ruinous tendencies are not confined to one region of the country, but spread themselves on the commerce, politics, and popular sentiment, not only of these States, but wherever our name and influence extend.

We need, my brethren, something more than idle declamation and angry contention over this subject. For the safe and speedy removal of this great evil—this *ulcer* upon our body politic, we need the prayers of all good men, the wisdom of statesmen, and the blessing of God. This secured, then hope would revive and Heaven stay the descending bolt. Our country would stand, as a proud and peerless illustration of the principle, that intelligent freemen can be just to others, and yet govern themselves—a rebuke to the grinding despotisms of the old world—the asylum of liberty, and the home of the oppressed.

IV. I mention the existing war with Mexico, as a *fourth* cause of national solicitude.

A state of peace is the only appropriate and healthy condition of a nation—a state in which she may cultivate her soil, improve her manufactures, extend her commerce, model and perfect her institutions, and promote the cause of internal improvement. War tends to defeat these noble ends. It impoverishes a nation's treasury, checks her enterprise, cripples her energies, puts an embargo upon her commerce, and paralyzes her best and brightest hopes. It ought, therefore, to be regarded as a most dreadful and terrible evil, the curse and scourge of nations. I may be permitted to quote the language of one trained to the military profession, and now a distinguished general of the American army.* He says: "If war be the natural state of savage tribes, peace is the first want of every civilized community. War, no doubt is,

* General Scott.

under any circumstances, a great calamity. Of the two parties of any war, one, at least, must be in the wrong, not unfrequently both. An error in such an issue is, on the parts of chief magistrates, ministers of state, and legislators having a voice in the question, a crime of the greatest magnitude. The slaying of an individual by an individual is, in comparative guilt, but a drop of blood. Hence the highest moral obligation to treat national differences with temper, justice, and fairness; always to see that the cause of war is not only *just* but *sufficient*, to be sure that we do not covet our neighbor's lands, nor anything that is his, that we are as ready to give, as demand explanation, apology, indemnity; in short, we should especially remember, ' All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' "

Such is the opinion and advice of one, who knows, from personal experience and observation, the evils of war. Henry Clay, in his late speech at Lexington, Kentucky, whose sentiments, on this subject, will find a ready response in every christian heart, says : " War unhinges society, disturbs its peaceful and regular industry, and scatters poisonous seeds of disease and immorality, which continue to germinate and diffuse their baneful influence, long after it has ceased. Dazzling by its glitter, pomp and pageantry, it begets a spirit of wild adventure and romantic enterprise, and often disqualifies those who embark in it, after their return from the bloody fields of battle, from engaging in the industrious and peaceful vocations of life." To many, there seems something noble in " the pomp and circumstance of glorious war"---something sublime in the onset of battles, as contending legions meet and dash against each other---something generous and godlike in the ardor of that chivalrous feeling which glows in the hour of danger. We need not say that this feeling is fanned to a flame, by the graphic descriptions of the historian and the poet, who would crown the blood-stained hero with the laurels of imperishable renown. But

we have no sympathy with this feeling. It is associated in our mind with carnage—with garments rolled in blood. Let us survey the field, where two mighty armies are arrayed for the work of mutual death. Their passions rage like the heavings of a volcano. They rush against each other and amid the crash and thunder of arms, the dust and smoke of heated artillery, they struggle for victory. With all the frenzy of fallen spirits, they multiply heaps of slain until the shouts of the victors and the shrieks of the vanquished proclaim that the work of mutual butchery is over!

Now visit this scene when the fever-heats of passion have subsided, and what do you behold? A field covered with ghastly and disfigured forms, the mutilated bodies of the dead and the dying! Here, is a noble youth cut down in the spring-tide of manly promise, perhaps the only support of declining age. There, is one calling upon Heaven to protect his children, soon to be left fatherless. Another tenderly breathes a beloved name consecrated by the most endearing tie. Some are spending their last moments uttering the most horrid blasphemies, others are pleading piteously for the pardon of their sins. The eyes of all wander wistfully over the scene that is fast fading from their view; and convulsively do they grasp the hand of those who are mournfully bidding them a last farewell. In the contemplation of a scene of such overwhelming sadness,

“ If angels weep, it is at such a sight.”

Is there not something unnatural in all this; something that exhibits a ferocity in man, with all his boasted sensibility of soul, superior to the savage tribe? The lion leaps upon the antelope—the tiger preys, *not* upon his kind. But man, endowed with reason and intelligence, as if there were no pity in his heart, aims to destroy his *brother* man, that he may gain immortal honors from the historian and the poet. But who envies him, though he may have covered himself with military glory on a thousand fields? The blood of murdered men

and the cries of widows and orphans, are associated with his honors and his triumphs !

We might as well undertake to separate the lightning's vivid flash from the riving thunderbolt, as dissociate in our minds the horrors of the battle field from the glories of the individual conqueror.

“ O war ! what art thou ?
At once the proof and scourge of man’s fallen state ;
After the brightest conquest, what appears
Of all thy glories ? for the vanquish’d chains ;
For the proud victors, what ? Alas ! to reign
O’er desolated nations.”

Would, my brethren, that there were no special occasion for this allusion to the evils of man. But there is ; we are, at this moment, engaged in a most unjust and unnecessary war with the Republic of Mexico. I mean *we*, the people of these United States. Whatever may be said of the causes leading to this war, or the manner of their agency, still it is the war of no particular party—of no section of the country—of *no individual*. It is the *nation’s* war, made such by the *first* and all the subsequent acts of Congress in relation to it. The nation is responsible for its existence and continuance. I recognise therefore in myself, the right and the duty to have and to express an opinion in regard to the origin and evils of this war. I say, then, that it assumed its national character by the utterance of a falsehood upon a question of fact. I allude to that part of the declaration of war, which spoke of it as existing by the act of Mexico.

For one, I do not believe that this states the truth. The war message of the President, sent to Congress May 11th, 1846, places the necessity for the war on our part solely on the ground, that the Mexicans had invaded our territory, and thereon shed American blood. Is this true ? Were *we* or the Mexicans the invaders ? This conflict of arms occurred in consequence of the marching of our troops to the Rio Grande, opposite to Matamoras, the order for which, was given by the President, while Congress was in session, without any consultation with that body, and while, moreover, a

foreign minister was on his way to the city of Mexico, for the purpose of settling the question or questions in dispute between the two countries.

The territory on which American blood was first shed, and into which our army had passed, was at this very moment claimed by the Mexicans, was in the actual possession and under the government of the Mexican nation, and was *not* claimed or governed by *this* nation. I say *was* not ; for I take it to be a true doctrine, that the opinion of the President, as to a boundary line in dispute between two countries, needs the act of Congress, before the nation is committed to it. Nobody thought of any claim, on our part, to the territory lying between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, until after the annexation of Texas. Now when we received Texas into this confederacy, we certainly did not take all the world, but Texas simply as she was, when we found her. We therefore did not acquire any more territory than she possessed. Had Texas, then, any claim to this territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande ? Her only pretence to such a claim, was founded on a bargain made with Santa Anna, when under duress, a prisoner of war, and therefore incompetent to contract for the nation, which bargain, moreover, the Mexicans never recognised, but always repudiated. It is true that the Texans made military efforts, between 1836 and 1843, to assert this spurious claim, but every one of them failed, and left the Mexican nation in full possession of the disputed soil. Texas had no claim by treaty, none by purchase, none by conquest. She had none at all. She came into this confederacy, with no right of any kind to the territory in dispute. This was exclusively vested in the Mexican nation.

These, I believe, are the facts on this point, and if so, then it is not true that the Mexicans invaded our territory and thus war existed by the act of Mexico. The exact *opposite* is the truth. We invaded *their* territory and the ensuing hostilities were on their part *defensive*; on ours *aggressive*.

The language of Senator Benton, is as true now as when uttered. Alluding to an effort to annex Texas and include the disputed territory, he says : "The treaty in all that relates to the boundary of the Rio Grande, is an act of unparalleled outrage on Mexico. It is the seizure of two thousand miles of her territory, without a word of explanation with her, and by virtue of a treaty with Texas, to which she is no party."

We boldly assert, then, in view of all the facts, that this is no war of defence on our part, but purely a war of aggression. *Mexico* is defending her altars, her fire-sides, her castles, her temples—not *we*. Our soil has not been invaded or moistened with one drop of blood. Granting, for a moment, the false position of the President, in his war message to congress, that we *began* to repel invasion ; I desire to know what our army is doing in the city of Mexico ? Have we not, upon this supposition, accomplished our object ?

Why then penetrate her interior, and bombard her cities, and murder her citizens, and plunder her wealth ? Is *this national* honor ? Is this becoming a high-minded and Christian nation ? What, in the name of justice and humanity, I ask, are we doing ? Are we fighting for conquest and territory ? We do not want the mines, the mountains, the morasses, and the sterile lands of Mexico. Why then this waste and havoc of human life, treasure, and blood ? Let Congress or the President, clearly explain the reasons and object of this war. I fear there are reasons, in the secret counceil chambers of this nation, which are not yet fully revealed. I fear—I *do* fear that conquest is our object, that we may extend over that vast territory the dark realm of slavery. And against this, as an humble citizen of this republic, I do and *will* protest. We do not want Mexico on any condition—our territory is already sufficiently vast. Let me not be told, that it is a rich country—a great acquisition. If the object is to extend and perpetuate slavery, I would scorn to receive it, were its plains paved with gold, and its mountains studded all over with diamond-rocks—

yea, if it were the paradise of Heaven, I would not take it on these conditions. Whatever may be the secret or avowed object of this war, it is a foul blot upon our national honor. It is supremely contemptible for this Christian and great nation, and in the full blaze of the nineteenth century, to stoop from her high dignity, and go to war with a half-civilized, barbarous, weak and defenceless people. Let me not be told, that God will overrule it all for the good of Mexico—that He designs, by these means, to break the spell of a false religion, and introduce to the darkened minds of her children, the light of a pure Christianity. Whatever the Arbiter of nations, in his gracious sovereignty, may do, have we an unqualified license to commit evil, that good may come? Must we pause to refute this papal dogma, exploded by the light of a by-gone age? In every aspect in which we can look at the existing war, it is superlatively *wrong*, and it should receive, as it deserves, the frown of all Christendom. Its existence mars the sacred festivities of this hallowed occasion. It makes us put the cup of national blessing to our lips with a trembling hand.

I have now, my brethren, brought under review some of the causes of national solicitude. I have designed to state the truth with all plainness and fidelity. I would not needlessly offend the feelings or prejudices of any, but, on this day, I felt that I should be justified in departing somewhat from the ordinary topics of pulpit discourse. But can I be accused of departing from the truth? Might not much more be said in perfect consistency with existing facts in our country's history?

Are we not as a nation becoming more and more lax in our morals? Does not the belief, in an all-seeing God sit loosely upon multitudes of the people? Is not the Sabbath desecrated and set at naught? Has not the red man been wronged—driven from the graves of his fathers and scattered, like the leaves of his native forests? Is not infidelity permitted to stalk abroad unrebuted? Is not the power of

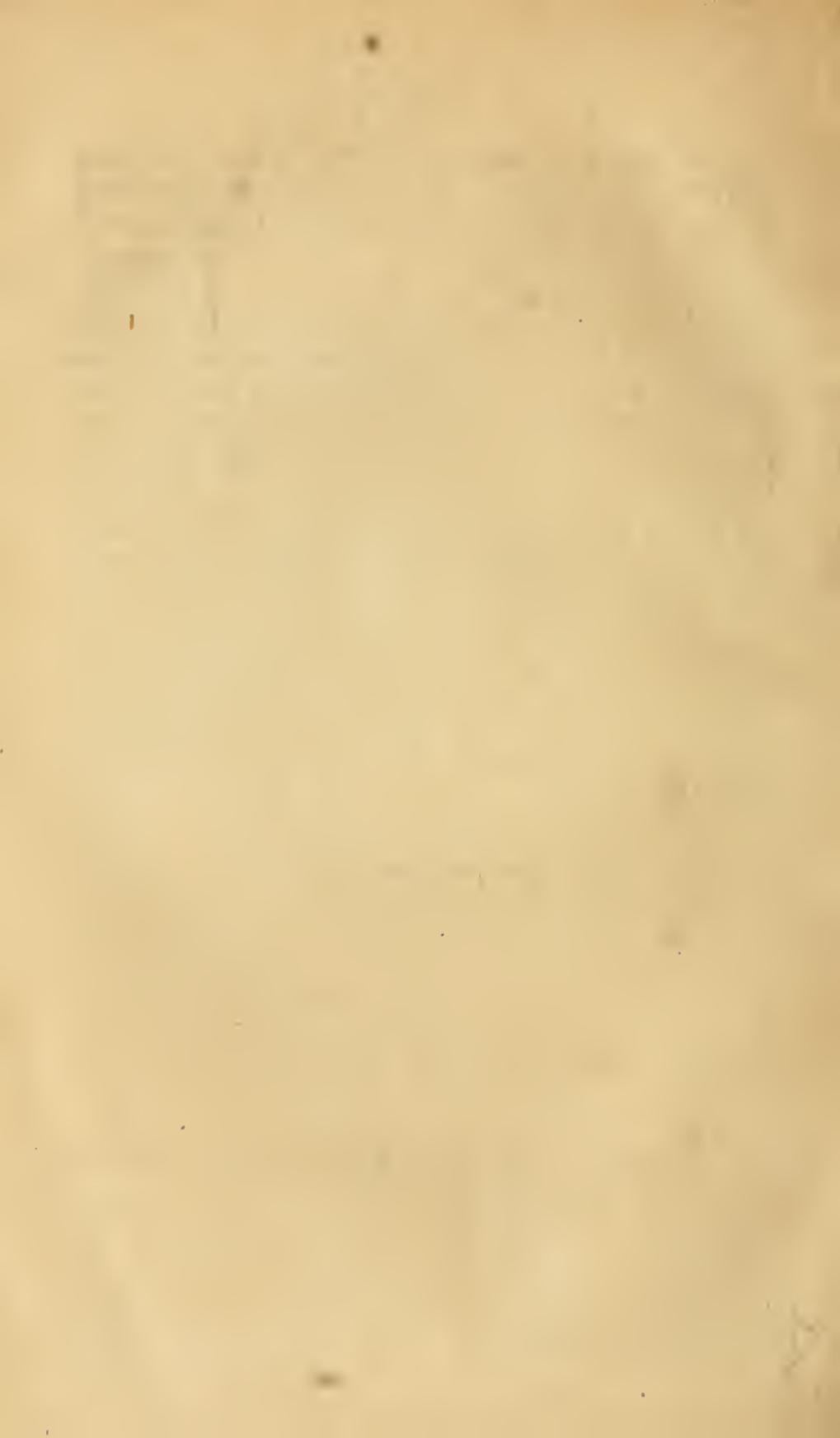
the Roman Pontiff increasing? Has not the spirit of honorable confidence, of high-minded Christian patriotism forsaken, to a great extent, our halls of legislation? Are not the high seats of the venerated dead occupied, in some instances, by men, who glory in their shame—who publicly set at naught the admonitions of the pulpit—who speak of the religion of their forefathers as an idle dream, and laugh emptily at its obligations? No means are left untried to lift these very men to the high seats they dishonor? And do they represent the feelings and sentiments of those who send them? If not, why are they there? Why are they permitted to come down upon our national and State capitols, like clouds of devouring locusts, consuming all that is fair and lovely in the principles of our Protestant faith? But, I will not enlarge. Let these facts mingle their influence with the festivities of this occasion. Let us rejoice, with trembling. * * The text, my brethren, has a more local and personal application. As a Church, we have great occasion to rejoice. God has gone before us, a weak and feeble band, removing obstacles, and crowning our efforts with signal success. He has more than realized our most sanguine expectations. We have been enabled, with His blessing, to rear this desirable edifice, and we now worship within its consecrated walls. It is meet for us to rejoice, but yet, let us do it with trembling. If we become spiritually proud—if we do not duly appreciate our privileges—if we do not keep holy fire burning on our altars, God may remove the candlestick out of its place, and dispossess us of our beautiful temple. I say then, in the language of the text, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

But the sermon has a still more personal application. You are now happy in your social and domestic relations, and in these you rejoice. Your children are the joy of your hearts, and the pride of your eyes. Your companions smile upon you, and greet you with full-hearted affection. These are some of the beautiful rills, which Providence has sent spark-

ling and flowing over the wastes of human life. And how they invigorate and refresh us, as we drink at their fountains. We greatly rejoice in these blessings, but let us do it with trembling. We hold them by a very frail and uncertain tenure.

Our hearths, now bright with the sunshine of happy faces, may soon be darkened. Our halls, now vocal with joyous voices, all music to our ears, may soon be silent. Bitter dregs may be mingled in our cup of blessing, and the bare possibility of such an event, makes us, even now, drink it with trembling. * * * Since the last yearly festival, how many fond parents have seen their bright and beautiful laid in the dust, and they have refused to be comforted because they are not! How many wives have been left widows, and how many husbands have wept over the graves of the loved and the lost! Oh! in a world like this, can we rejoice otherwise than with trembling? Let us look up hopefully to that world, where death enters never, where there is no danger of forfeiture or change, where those we have loved will love in return forever;

“ There fragrant flowers immortal bloom,
And joys supreme are given ;
There rays divine disperse the gloom,
Beyond the confines of the tomb
Appears the dawn of heaven.”





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 897 172 3

